



2022 FINAL REPORT

Prepared for our Community Partners





INTRODUCTION

With a continued commitment to celebrating the extraordinary contributions of artists of African descent, the Annual Chattanooga Festival of Black Arts & Ideas: Juneteenth Independence Day celebrated its 5-year milestone anniversary with the programming of 21 unique and dynamic events that saw record breaking attendance.

This year's slate of events saw the return of the Juba Dance Festival, August Wilson Playmakers Festival and our James Baldwin Festival of Words. Because of the indoor requirements for these events, they were eliminated from the past 2 years due to COVID restrictions. In addition, we added 3 new events. The inaugural Juneteenth Freedom Run / Opal Lee Walk for Freedom, RBG Ball and the Black Arts Awards were very well received by attendees.

As always, these festivals aim to spotlight emerging and established Black artists and build greater community awareness of the diversity of Black arts within Chattanooga and Hamilton County. This year experienced a huge increase in the emerging artists between the ages of 15 – 30. We are steadfast in our belief that it is essential for this festival to provide opportunities for discussions on topics that impact the lives of all those who call Chattanooga and Hamilton County home and beyond. It is those opportunities that make this festival unique among festivals in Chattanooga. We believe that the arts and those who create it are the best vehicle to move those discussion forward.

From the start, the most important outcomes we wanted the festival to achieve was to exposure of the greater Chattanooga community to the broad spectrum of exemplary work by local, and eventually nationally recognized, Black artists. This year our Literary Lounge which showcased 25 local Black authors in a variety of genera helped move that outcome forward. The energy in the room was electric as each of the authors discovered that they were not alone.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

The last five years has been amazing! In April of 2018, our very first year of the festival, former Mayor Andy Berk proclaimed June 13th – 19th as “A celebration of the Chattanooga Festival of Black Arts & Ideas in remembrance of Juneteenth”.

The next year, 2019, I worked very closely with Councilwoman Demetrus Coonrod to persuade the Chattanooga City Council to make Juneteenth Independence Day a paid holiday which they did unanimously. On the heels of our city’s announcement, the US Congress passed a bill to make Juneteenth a national holiday that was signed into law by President Joe Biden.



SUMMARY CONTINUED

In 2020, as the world combated COVID and protested the murder of George Floyd, we struggled to find a meaningful and safe way to commemorate and celebrate Juneteenth. The solution was a collaboration with Black churches, Devine 9 Greeks, Miller Park protesters and 155 Red, Black and Green flags across the Walnut Street bridge. It was magical!

The following year, 2021, we struggled to get our lives and the festival back to normal. We commemorated the 100th Anniversary of the Black Wall Street Massacre with a reading of an eyewitness account by Tulsa Attorney B.C. Franklin. In addition, we spent Father’s Day on the Southern Belle Riverboat and celebrated





5TH ANNIVERSARY 2022 FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES

The CFBA&I orbits around June 19th because Juneteenth represents an historic triumph of the human spirit. We honor our ancestors by holding this day in reverence and celebrating ourselves to celebrate them.

Wielding the transformative powers of the arts, this year's festivals became more revolutionary acts of Sankofa-- retrieving that which was ours and had been forgotten. Our events and discussions delighted, instructed, consoled, awakened, and refined all the presenters, artists and festival goers. For me and many of those I spoke to it restored a tiny bit of our humanity. Below is a schedule of all of our events with special attention given to the newer offerings.

RBG Ball

On Saturday, June 4th – The SOLD OUT Inaugural RBG Ball (Red, Black & Green) and Black Arts Awards kicked-off the month-long Juneteenth celebration. This inaugural gala included the first Black Arts Awards Ceremony. The black-tie affair honored local artists with awards in the disciplines of music, dance, visual arts, literature, theatre, and film. The program included the introduction of 3 historical African princesses who will be available for public appearances, birthday parties, festivals and school visits throughout the year.

The meal was curated and prepared by celebrity chef, Kenyatta Ashford. Chef Ashford studied at the renowned Culinary Institute of America in New York. He recently was awarded Jean-Louis Palladin Professional Work/Study Grant by the James Beard Foundation that he used to study cuisines of the African American diaspora and West Africa.

www.neutralgroundchatt.com/





Featured Artist Exhibit Opening Reception

On Thursday, June 9th – The Featured Artist Exhibition Opening Reception, with a record number of festival goers who got to meet and greet visual artist, La-Tesia Danielle. La-Tesia is a dynamic multidisciplinary artist working in poetry, visual art, performance, and community engagement. View La-Tesia's website: artbylatesia.com



Joe Turner's Come & Gone

On Friday, June 10th – The SOLD-OUT Opening Night of August Wilson's "Joe Turner's Come & Gone" was produced by Chattanooga Theatre Centre in the Circle Theatre in partnership with The August Wilson Playmakers Festival (Chattanooga Festival of Black Arts & Ideas: Juneteenth). This was the 3rd play produced by CTC as part of August Wilson's 10 play Century Cycle Series.



James Baldwin Festival of Words

The Chattanooga Festival of Black Arts & Ideas' James Baldwin Festival of Words partnered with Rhyme-N-Chatt Interactive Poetry Organization to present a full slate of literary opportunities.

Rhyme-N-Chatt is a non-profit poetry organization based in Chattanooga since 1999 that provides a safe place where poetry is shared and discussed and the poet is valued.

Learn more about Rhyme-N-Chatt by visiting their website at rhymenchatt.com.



Writer's Workshop

On Saturday, June 11th – The Writer's Workshop was a visual-based prompts workshop inspired by James Baldwin's life with an open mic performance opportunity and light refreshments.





Literary Lounge

On Saturday, June 11th – The Literary Lounge provided local Black authors and poets the opportunity to come together & share excerpts of their writing. They also had booths to sell their books and merchandise. A conversation between the writers and the audience was encouraged.



Sip, Paint & Spit

On Sunday, June 12th – Sip, Paint & Spit: Poetry Meets Paint was a fun event that combined a sip and paint session with a poetry showcase. This year's featured visual artist, La-Tesia Danielle, led the paint session while local poets performed their work to create an interactive conversation between the artists, poets and the audience.



An Intimate Evening with Obbie West

On Friday, June 17th – An Intimate Evening with Obbie West was unforgettable! His delivery was electric, his ideas were refreshing, and his talent was undeniable. International spoken word artist, Obbie West, is a native of Los Angeles and a retiree from the United States Army. He offers poetry presentations from a unique and captivating angle.

Visit Obbie's website: obbiewest.com



Fresh Out the Shoebox

On Tuesday, June 21st – Rhyme N Chatt's Fresh Out the Shoebox - Youth Open Mic was an interactive session led by the poets of Rhyme N Chatt. This open mic session was free and open to all, with an emphasis on youth.



Shades of Poetry: Young Black Voices

On Friday, June 25th – The Shades of Poetry Showcase featuring Young Black Voices was a tribute to James Baldwin. The performances opened with poetry from local youth who were excited to share their work.

In addition, an ADULTS ONLY session of memorable performances of original works inspired by video clips of Baldwin's fight for civil rights during his revolutionary life.



Joe Turner's Come & Gone & August Wilson Discussion

On Sunday, June 12th – August Wilson's "Joe Turner's Come & Gone", was followed by a lecture presented by August Wilson Society Education Director, Pedro E. Alvarado. This is his 3rd year joining us to enlighten and entertain the audience about the play and the life of Mr. Wilson.



Peeing in a Soda Bottle

On Thursday, June 16th – "Peeing in a Soda Bottle" was a profound one-woman show by E. Claudette Freeman. Chosen for the Staged Reading Category in the 2020 Atlanta Black Theatre Festival, "Peeing in a Soda Bottle", celebrates old Southern woman wisdom and front porch storytelling.

FREE Panel Discussion:

This performance was followed immediately by a panel discussion with the playwright and other local theatre professionals. This was a unique opportunity to hear from Black playwrights, actors, lighting, set and costume designers. Panel discussion was free and did not require attendance of the play.





Juba Dance Festival

On Saturday, June 18th – The SOLD-OUT Juba Dance Festival featured the D. William Dance Academy in an exciting international dance showcase that drew inspiration from dance traditions the world over. Special guest Crystal Newman and the Professional Dance Company added another level of performance to the festival.



The Legacy Music Festival

On Saturday, June 18th – The Legacy Music Festival presented “Summer of Soul”, a tribute to the Harlem Cultural Festival of 1969. With a screening of the award-winning film by Quest Love, local musicians payed homage to artists that performed at the event such as Nina Simone (Keelah Jackson), Jimi Hendrix (Rick Rushing), Mango Santamaria (Kofi Mawuko) Mahalia Jackson and others.



Freedom Run & Opal Lee Walk

On Saturday, June 18th – The inaugural Juneteenth Freedom Run & Mrs. Opal Lee Walk was the perfect way to show our unity as we celebrate Juneteenth. Lindsay Bisset said it best, “Freedom is a journey we take together as a country, and this race is a reminder of our commitment together”. Juneteenth is a holiday for all Americans and this run is a great way to show our unity here in Chattanooga & Hamilton County.



Father's Day Brunch

On Sunday, June 19th – After our SOLD OUT 3rd Annual Black Dads Matter Father's Day Gospel Jazz Brunch attendees were dazzled by this year's featured musical artist, jazz trumpeter Melvin Miller & Co. with singer Marsha Miller. This event crescendos with the presentatin of the Extraordinary Father of The Year Award. The concert was FREE and open to the public starting at 2:00.



JUNETEENTH COMMEMORATION CEREMONY

...and Concert

On Sunday, June 19th – The Juneteenth Commemoration Ceremony & Concert invited ALL of Greater Chattanooga to join in the celebration at the Chamberlin Pavilion on the UTC campus with a performance by Ruben Studdard. In addition, we all honored Dr. Roland M. Carter with a street bearing his name.



EVALUATION: STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES OF THE PROJECT

The past 5 years have been a rollercoaster ride filled with highs, lows, excitement and fear. The momentum of 2019's festival was lost in the uncertainty of COVID 19 for the 2020 festival. While the 2021 festival was better, it was still found lacking without a full range of activities. Our trajectory for growth over five years seems to have been delayed.

We believe that the recent popularity of Juneteenth in 2020 caused an influx of groups and organizations presenting events in it's honor. This created confusion with programing. In an effort to create one united Juneteenth celebration in Chattanooga and Hamilton County we reached out to many of those who presented asking if they would consider working together. Our proposal was meet with little response. A unified Juneteenth will continue to be our goal.

While our small pool of local Black artists is world class, we felt our 5-year benchmark would be the perfect time to expand by adding more regional, national and internationally recognized artists. We were ecstatic to present Ruben Studdard in partnership with UTC. We also presented spoken word artist Obbie West from Los Angles and Playwright E. Claudette Freeman of Fort Lauderdale.

While our Black Dads Matter Father's Day event continues to be one of our best attended events I am happy to report that it was not the only one that was SOLD-OUT. Our Inaugural RBG Ball, Black Arts Awards, Juba Dance Festival and August Wilson's Joe Turner's Come and Gone were also SOLD OUT. While the other events where not sold out, many experienced recorded numbers of attendees.

Our biggest strength is our team. They are a very dedicated group that works hard. It would be an understatement to say we all love each other and work well together. This year 3 new members seamlessly joined our team. Each of them has worked with us in the past in some capacity which aided the process.

Another of our strengths is our programing. We have a gift for developing and organizing events with top artists and meaningful intent. In addition, the "Ideas" component of the festival makes us unique among festival in this area. Our strength is our passion and purpose in all we do.

None of this would be possible without our community partners. Another strength is the incredible number of supports/partners.

While our volunteer team is extraordinary, they are also a source of weakness. Not unlike many small volunteer based arts nonprofits, we all have other commitments and jobs which has made it a challenge to find the time needed to run the organization at the level it sometimes needs.

EVALUATION: STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES OF THE PROJECT

Finally, I am excited to report that we have completed our strategic plan facilitated by Q Strategies. The plan has given us several goals and strategies that will help improve our organization on different levels. We look forward to sharing that document with you and our other community partners. This past year also saw a substantial improvement in our social media presences with the help of Justin Booker's Vityl Media Group. We also improved our marketing reach through a partnership with Chattanooga Tourism Co. Additionally, we are now working with Arts Build's Monkeypod cohort which will add a level of simplicity we need to become more efficient.

Your generous contributions over the last 5 years is greatly appreciated.

On behalf of our board of advisors, volunteers, vendors, artists and festival goers, thank you for all you do to support us and others who work to improve the quality of life, in and through the arts for ALL.



